

KOGARAH UNITING CHURCH FEBRUARY 15, 2026
Mountaintop Experiences

GREETING

Throughout this Season after the Epiphany, we have listened for echoes of God's call—to follow, to shine, to live in God's light.

This week's scriptures take us to mountains—first with Moses, who witnessed God's glory in awe and wonder, and then with Jesus and his friends, who encounter a vision that transforms what they see and know. You may have had your own mountaintop experiences—times of awe and hope. As we gather in worship, we pause and open ourselves to God's presence.

CALL TO WORSHIP

You are welcome here and now in this place.
You are invited to lay down your burdens.
You are invited to join as we worship God.
Let us take a moment to prepare ourselves.

Silence

Creator God,
you have spoken the earth and all its wonders into life.
You have created us in your own divine image.
You have said that all things were made good.

Let us drink of that ever-flowing goodness today,
let us breathe the invigorating air of the Spirit,
and let your love flow through us in this moment.
In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen

LIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE God is here.....God is with us

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

As we gather on this land, we pay our respects to the Biddegal people of the Eora nation, who have lived, worked and played on this country for thousands of years. We bring to mind their elders, past and present, and their place in passing on story and song, language and lore. May we commit ourselves to ongoing peace, joy, love, and hope as we grow in relationship, First and Second Peoples of this land.

SAYING WHO WE ARE

Our vision is to be a loving and caring community, sharing God's love with the world. We are a congregation who welcome people of all cultures and lifestyles. We are creating a safe place for community and sharing the journey of life and faith.

SING You were in this place AT/433

At the dawn of the ages
you pulled land from the sea.
With your word you invented
all we know, all we see:
creek and desert and forest,
red and grey kangaroo.
You were in this place –
but we never knew.

Paintings seen on the rock face,
footprints left in the sand,
campfire next to the river,
songs that rise from the land:
signs that seem so elusive,
shadows just out of view.
You were in this place –
but we never knew.

Do we take after Jacob,
blind to what lies at hand,
needing dreams to inform us
God is here in his land?
See him suffering and dying,
bread and wine tell the news.
You were in this place –
but we never knew.

Jesus, open our senses,
help us see you today
in the person beside us,
as we work, as we play.
While we love you and serve you,
may it never be true:
you were in this place –
but we never knew.

© 1987 Robin Mann
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord Jesus Christ, God's glory and love shone through you that day on the mountain, and you persisted in revealing that glory and love through your words and deeds, through your life of humble service. We hear again these words of God "This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him!", and we confess our failure to listen to you and our capacity to conceal rather than reveal your glory and your love.

If we conceal your love because our ears are plugged by prejudice and intolerance,

 forgive us, Lord.

If we diminish your glory by reflecting our self-centredness,

 forgive us, Lord.

If we hide your truth through our lack of credible witness,

 forgive us, Lord.

If we suppress your justice through our failure to empower those who are powerless,

 forgive us, Lord.

If we obscure your mercy through our hard and unforgiving attitudes,

 forgive us, Lord.

If we limit your compassion through our indifference to those in need,

 forgive us, Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to renounce any shameful attitudes of mind and heart so that we reveal your glory in and through all we do and say and are. This we pray in your name, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

"The Lord our God is a forgiving God...for the Lord our God is holy" (Psalm 99: 8,9) And the Apostle Paul writes: "All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image..." (2 Cor. 3:18) So that - "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new" (2 Cor. 5:17)

The good news therefore is this: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

 Thanks be to God!

PEACE

SING

I heard the Voice of Jesus say TIS/585

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

 "Come unto me and rest;

lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast."

I came to Jesus as I was,

so weary and worn and sad;

I found in him a resting-place,

and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this world's light;
look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk
till travelling days are done.

PD; words: Horatius Bonar

Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures Exodus 24: 12-18

¹²The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." ¹³So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them." ¹⁵Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Reading from the Christian Scriptures Matthew 17: 1-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁵While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." ⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. ⁹As they were coming down the

mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

REFLECTION

Exodus 24:12–18, Matthew 17:1–9

Good morning, everyone! It is so wonderful to see your faces again. As many of you know, I have just returned from a three-week trip to South Korea. I try to visit my home country every one or two years to see family and friends and recharge. This time, the weather gave me a huge "welcome"! Just one or two days before I left Sydney, it was a typical Australian summer—the temperature was over 40 degrees! It was so hot that we were all looking for air conditioning and cold drinks. But then, I jumped on a plane, and 10 hours later, I landed at Seoul airport. When I walked out, do you know what the temperature was? It was minus 12 degrees! That is a 52-degree difference in just one day! My body was in total shock. In Australia, we worry about sunburn and heat; but in Korea, I was worried my nose might freeze and fall off! But despite the cold, it was beautiful. We saw so much white snow. For my children, it was like a dream. They went skiing, they played in the snow, and we had a wonderful time eating hot street food, we laughed a lot, and we made beautiful memories.

But, even in all that joy in Korea, I felt something strange in my heart. I have been away from Korea for over 30 years now. When I am there, I look like everyone else. I speak the language. But as soon as I start talking about my thoughts, my theology, and the culture I've lived in, people look at me differently. They see a "strange" Korean man. In their eyes, I am not really one of them anymore; I am "the man from Australia." But then, when I fly back to Sydney and land at the airport, I feel at home. Yet, to many people here, I am still a "migrant." I am caught between two worlds. This reminds me of my time as a Youth Worker. I used to work with many second-generation Korean migrant children. They were born here in Australia. They are Australians! But they look Korean. When they are here, they are seen as "the Korean kids." But when they visit Korea, they are "the foreigners." They don't understand the culture perfectly, and they feel like strangers in their parents' home. It is a painful and confusing place to be. We often ask ourselves: "Who am I? Where do I really belong?" We feel like "Permanent Strangers." Maybe you feel this way too. Whether you moved here recently or your family has been here for generations, we all have moments where our identity feels a bit blurry.

This is exactly why today's Gospel is so important. Peter, James, and John were also confused. They followed Jesus, but they didn't fully "get it" yet. So, Jesus took them up a high mountain. Suddenly, the 'human' Jesus they knew—the man with dusty sandals—changed. He began to shine like the sun! In that moment, his true

identity was revealed. He was no longer just a carpenter's son from Nazareth, a teacher, or a miracle worker; he stood before them as the glorious Son of God. Why did Jesus show them this glory? Why did he pull back the curtain of heaven for just a moment?

Because Jesus knew what was coming. He knew that very soon, these same disciples would see him bleeding, bruised, and hanging on a shameful cross. He knew they would face a "Valley of Darkness" where everything seemed lost. He wanted them to have this "Mountain-top Understanding" so they could survive the storm. He was telling them, "When you see me suffering, do not forget who I really am. I am the King, the Son of God, who chooses to suffer for you." But look at what this understanding did to them later! Think about the Book of Acts. These same disciples—who were once confused and hiding in locked rooms—suddenly stood up in the streets of Jerusalem. After the Holy Spirit came, what did they preach? They didn't just talk about a "good teacher." They preached the Identity of Jesus they saw on that mountain! Peter, the same man who was trembling and confused on the mountain, stood before thousands of people. He spoke with a voice like thunder because he had seen the sun-bright face of Jesus. He told the world, "The one you crucified is the Lord of Glory! He is the Son of the Living God!" Because they understood his true identity, they were no longer afraid of prison. They were no longer afraid of death. On that day, 3,000 people were baptized! Why? Because the disciples' conviction was so real. They were not sharing a story they heard; they were sharing the King they had seen with their own eyes. This is the power of a 'Mountain-top Experience.' It turns hiding fishermen into world-changing apostles. When you truly understand who Jesus is, you don't just follow him—you become a witness of his glory. That same power is available to us today. When we understand our identity in Christ, we can face any 'valley'—in Australia, in Korea, or no matter where we are in the world—with unshakable confidence, because we know exactly whose we are.

However, finding this understanding isn't always easy, because we often let our own voices get in the way. Look at Peter. While he was watching this amazing light show, he did what many of us do when we are nervous. He started talking! He didn't know what to say, but he felt like he had to say something. He shouted, 'Lord, this is great! Let's build three houses and stay here!' But God interrupted him. A cloud came down, and God said: "This is my Son... Listen to him!" God didn't say, "Peter, keep talking." He said, "Peter, be quiet and listen." You know, in our human relationships, listening is the most important thing. Have you ever noticed that God gave us one mouth, but two ears? Maybe that's a hint! Maybe it means we should listen twice as much as we speak. In our families, with our spouses, and with our children, most problems happen because we stop listening. We are so busy

preparing what we want to say next that we don't truly hear the heart of the person in front of us. This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. We begin the season of Lent. For the next 40 days, I want to challenge our church to a "Season of Listening." Usually, people "give up" things for Lent, like chocolate or coffee. That's fine. But this year, let's "give up" our own noise. Let's listen to God. Let's try sitting in silence for five minutes. Open your Bible, read a few verses, and ask, "Lord, what are you saying to me?" Let his Word sink into your heart. Let's listen to our neighbours. Look around our community—there are so many people who are quietly crying out for help. There are those struggling with hunger and the rising cost of living; there are homeless people seeking a safe place to sleep; and there are the sick and the elderly who feel forgotten. We see migrants struggling every day just to settle and find their place in this land, and we see our young people who are searching for hope in a confusing world. They don't need us to give them a lecture or a perfect answer. They just need someone to listen to their story. When we truly listen to the suffering of others, we are not just being kind; we are participating in the love of Jesus."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I invite you to use this season to truly discover who Jesus is. Let us take this time to listen to God, and to listen to our neighbours. Let us be a church that talks less, and loves more. In the sacred silence of Lent, may you hear the whisper of Jesus saying, "I love you, I am with you, follow me." I believe that when we truly find out who Jesus is and listen to him, something amazing happens. Just as the disciples descended the mountain to live empowered and transformed lives, we too will be sent into this challenging world. I am confident that as we follow him, we will become a healing presence in our world—living with the power to change our communities and make a real difference in people's lives. I pray that this Lent will be a deeply meaningful journey for all of us, as we walk with Jesus toward the cross of Calvary. Amen.

SING**I waited patiently for God****TIS/430**

I waited patiently for God,
for God to hear my prayer.
And God bent down to where I sank
and listened to me there.

God raised me from a miry pit,
from mud and sinking sand.
And set my feet upon a rock,
where I can firmly stand.

And on my lips a song was put,
a new song to the Lord.
Many will marvel, open-eyed,
and put their trust in God.

Great wonders you have done, O Lord,
all purposed for our good.
Unable every one to name
I bow in gratitude.

© 1993 WGRG; words, John L. Bell, based on Psalm 40:1-11
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

OFFERTORY PRAYER

May our response be worthy , God, even in our misunderstanding.
May our response be enough, so that we may join with you seeking enough
for all. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Loving God,
you take us to the mountaintop,
and you are with us when we are coming down.
Help us to hold the glory and wisdom of the mountain top
each and every day.

Merciful God,
let us be gracious with those around us,
those who are on the mountaintop,
those who are glowing on the way down,
those who can barely lift their eyes even to see the top of the mountain,
and every person in between.

Generous God,
Be with those who make decisions for our community,
for those in local, state and federal parliament,
for those who head committees,
for those who lead churches,
for those in leadership positions.
May they be wise and fair in their dealings,
may they embody goodness and integrity,
and may they help to smooth the way for everyone to flourish and
experience the joys at the top of the mountain.
In Jesus' name we pray,

SING Lord, the light of your love is shining TIS/675

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us,
set us free by the truth you now bring us –
shine on me, shine on me.

Chorus:

Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word, Lord,
and let there be light.

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness –
shine on me, shine on me.

Chorus:

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here may our lives tell your story –
shine on me, shine on me.

Chorus:

Graham Kendrick © Thank you Music
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150

BLESSING

Like the servant who listens and the disciples who glimpse God's glory, we are called to listen, rise, and follow Christ into the world.

May you know the blessing of God,
whether you are going up or coming down.
May you know the goodness of God,
whether in the small or big moments of life,
and may the peace of God that passes understanding be with you,
Now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING OUT SONG Companions on the Journey Season 8-8

Refrain

*We are companions on the journey,
breaking bread and sharing life;
and in the love we bear is the hope we share
for we believe in the love of our God,
we believe in the love of our God.*

No longer strangers to each other,
no longer strangers in God's house;
we are fed and we are nourished
by the strength of those who care,
by the strength of those who care.
We are companions on the journey

Refrain

We have been gifted with each other,
and we are called by the Word of the Lord:
to act with justice, to love tenderly,
and to walk humbly with our God,
to walk humbly with our God.

We are companions on the journey

Refrain

Repeat refrain

© 1985, Carey Landry and OCP; Words and Music: Carey Landry .
Reproduced under Copyright Licences: ONE LICENSE A-604712; CCLI #45150